

"O. HENRY AND AL JENNINGS"

Thrilling Story of Two Men Who Had Most Spectacular Careers of Crime, Served Time and Came Back to Distinguished and Useful Careers.

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(Continued From Previous Issue.)

CHAPTER II.
For a long time that night neither Porter nor I said a word. The whole prison seemed to be pressed down with an abject and sudden misery. The cons missed the kid from the patch of sunlight in the yard. They knew he had been bumped off.

"Colonel, have you any special hope as regards heaven?" Porter asked a glass of Tippecanoe to his lips. "The grafters had sent us a new case of costly wines."

"Give me a swallow of that, Bill; it must have a wonderful kick in it—up to heaven in two gulps!" Porter ignored me. It was not a night for jest.

"I am not speaking of a churchy paradise, but what, Al, is your idea of a state of perfect bliss?"

"At present, Bill, a disgust with off in the wilderness, where I would never again see the faces of men. I would want plenty of cattle and horses, but no trace of the human kin except perhaps a few of their books."

Porter impressed.

"No, the books would spoil it. Don't you realize, colonel, that the first paradise who wrecked the first paradise was

Thought? Adam and Eve and all their unfortunate descendants might still be lolling in joyous ignorance on the banks of the Euphrates if Eve hadn't been stung with the desire to know. It's quite a feather in a woman's cap. Mother Eve was the first rebel—the first thinker."

Porter seemed impressed with his own brilliance. He nodded his head to emphasize his conviction. "Yes, colonel," he continued, "thought is the great curse. Often when I was out on the Texas ranges I envied the sheep grazing on the mesa. They are superior to men. They have no meditations, no regrets, no memories."

"You're wrong, Bill, the sheep are more intelligent than men. They mind their own business. They do not take upon themselves the powers which belong to nature, or providence, or whatever you wish to call it."

"That's exactly what I finished saying. They do not think; therefore they are happy."

"How stupid you are tonight, Bill. You might just as well go into ecstasy over the joys of nonexistence. If thought makes you wretched, it is also thought that gives us our highest delectation. Does it not prove the conceit of thought?"

"Certainly. If I did not think, I would

be surely contented tonight. I should not be dragged down with a ton weight of futile anger."

"And if you did not think you would likewise be incapable of intense pleasures."

"I have yet to find in thought, Al, this beneficial aspect. I persist—thought is a curse. It is responsible for all the viciousness found in the human family; for depravity that are the monopoly of the lofty human species."

"Colonel—the kid's execution is but one example of the viciousness of thought. Men think a thing is and they conclude that it must be so. It is a sort of hypnotism."

"Porter was never very coherent in his philosophical pickings. He would begin with a whimsical absurdity and he would end this as a kind of string for his fancies."

He would pick up a thought here, an oddity there and run them all together. The finished necklace was like those chains of queerly sorted charms made by squaw women.

"I turned to me with indolent deliberation, attempting to conceal the anxiety in his mind. 'Was he guilty?'"

It was the thought tormenting me at that very moment. Neither of us had been thinking of anything else all evening.

CHAPTER I.
The last leaf on the calendar was turned. Porter had but seven days more to serve. Even Billy grew quiet. When Porter came to the night office he would wait on him, yielding him the only comfortable chair, kicking a footstool under his feet, and once Billy grabbed up a pillow from his cot and stuffed it under Porter's head. Porter stretched his ample body and turned on Billy a cherubic smile.

"See, Bill, I ain't gonna die, am I? Feel my pulse."

It was like that—funny—but underneath the burlesque was the disturbing sadness of foreboding. The full not of idiotic consideration for Porter as people are when they feel that a friend is leaving them forever.

We were packing a suitcase of memories for him to carry along into the open world, hoping he might find it now and again with a thought for the two cons in the prison potterhouse.

Good-byes are almost always one-sided, as though fate offered a toast—and the one who goes drinks off the wine and lands the toast with the drugs to the one who stays behind.

Porter Pleds for Old Clothes.
A twinge of regret Porter felt in the parting, perhaps. He sent off a tremulous quiver through the buoyant swell of his joy in the thought of freedom. He was excited and full of a nervous gaiety. His whispering, hesitant voice took on a chirp and his serene face was jauntily with happiness.

"Colonel, I want you to do me a favor. I don't mind an obligation to you, but never put it back and never hold it against me. You see, Al, I'm worried. I don't want to get arrested for running around unclothed. And that's what might happen if you don't lend your valuable aid."

"It's this way. The stuff they make the going-away suits with goes away too quickly. It melts in the sun and if it should rain it dissolves. I don't have no protection now."

"Now, when I came to this institution I brought a fine tweed suit with me. I'd like it back as a sort of dowry. Will you look it up for me, please? I do not admire prison gray. I'm afraid it is not a fashionable color this summer."

The large, humorous mouth—the one feature that was a bit weak-grinned. Porter buttoned his coat and surveyed himself sideways with the head of a dandy. A sheepish light stole into his eyes.

Brown Suit Asked for.
"I feel like a bride getting a trousseau. I'm so particular about the send-off this infernal roof is going to give me."

Porter's old suit had been given away to some other outcast convict. "Use your influence, colonel, and get me a good-looking business suit. I'll leave it to your judgment, but pick me out a rich brown."

The superintendents of all the shops knew the address of the steward's office. They were all fond of the nimble-tongued, amiable fellow that was Porter. Everyone wanted to make him a present as he was leaving.

"Porter got on his honeymoon? Sure, pick out the best, and hand it over to the outside superintendent of the state shop. He led me over to the storeroom and pulled down a bolt of fine wool cloth."

The regulation convict suit was made of some cotton material. The government paid the state \$25 to clothe its outgoing prisoners. The raiment was worth about \$4.50.

"Here's the finest piece of brown English worsted in the state of Ohio." We decided on that and Porter came over for a fitting. The men laughed as they measured him.

Tries His Outgoing Clothes.
"Want the seams runnin' croostwise just to be otherwise," they teased. "If you had the pockets turned upside down, they'd never get wise to where this handsome suit come from. And you ain't got much to put in the pockets, anyways, and you'd be sure not to come back as a sneak thief."

It would have hurt Porter's pride at another time, but he was so concerned with the multitude of small preparations he had to make, and he had the crude jests of the prison tailors. In return they fashioned a suit that was without fault, even to Porter's fastidious taste.

On the night of July 23—the next morning he was to leave—Porter smuggled over his outfit.

"Gentlemen, whenever a great drama is to be staged, it is customary to give a dress rehearsal. Let the curtain up."

Bill tried on the suit. He had a black hat like the derby worn today and a pair of shoes made by a life prisoner. Porter showed around as they can be heard a mile off. The cons used to say it was done on purpose to prevent silent getaways. Porter was no exception.

Predicts Noise in World.
"I'll make quite a noise in the world, colonel. I'm bringing my own brass band along."

"You're bound to make a noise there, Bill."

"Here, I've come of this hair tonic on them." Billy got down Porter's remedy. "It can take the kick out of anything. Plonkers, meanies, bastards—we spent the precious hours flapping it back and forth. It was like the empty form from great waves against an impenetrable rock. The waves themselves came with a mighty rush, but at the base of the rock they ebbed, as though their force were suddenly spent. Thoughts and a hundred anxious questions were rushing upward in a surge of emotions, but at the top they failed and we dashed out this



GUARANTEE. That is quite unusual. In making good on guarantees retailers sometimes give credit or offer other merchandise, but there is a long, long trail a-winding from the CASH REGISTER BACK TO THE CUSTOMER. The popular idea is for the money to flow one way, from the customer to the dealer.

That very day, Mr. Kerlin, the assistant general manager, was closing up a very unique incident.

A Bowers clerk, overzealous to serve, agreed to sell a patron a lawn mower. This taking on a new line without authority was strictly against the rules, and caused quite a little trouble.

The wholesale hardware house had to look to the factory, as it did not carry extra parts in stock. Delay dragged into weeks when the broken wheel was taken to a local foundry and welded just as good as new. The last letter requested to hear of any further difficulty with the grass-cutting machine.

The old patent medicine doctor used to guarantee a bottle of his dope to do everything from bringing back pristine enthusiasm to removing warts.

Everyone takes for granted, however, certain protection from reliable dealers, although there has been no such specific understanding.

The Bowers people were explaining interesting features of their business, including convenient methods for rendering service. More than once something was said about "our guarantee."

There was some difficulty in showing any interest in guarantees with the thoughts already in mind. They urged, however, that nothing is sold over a Bowers counter which cannot be fully guaranteed to give satisfaction.

"Doing a strictly cash business, how do you credit returned goods?" The answer came back quick as a shot:

"Ours is an UNRESTRICTED GUARANTEE. If goods are not satisfactory we give the MONEY BACK."

The clerk wasted much time in going to a wholesale hardware store to make a proper selection. Instead of sticking on his job serving groceries he broke into the realm of "frenzied service," one of the causes of the h. c. l.

The clerk left to take another job at about the same time a wheel of the lawn mower broke.

The customer, not locating the clerk, took the matter up with Bowers' headquarters. He did not want his money back, but demanded the broken part be replaced so he could cut his grass. He

It seems that the accommodation might have ended when the clerk went out of his way to do an extra service. It is about as absurd to want to buy a lawn mower at a city grocery store as to go to a jewelry store for a pair of rubber boots or to a paint store for a ukulele.

The Mr. Bowers Stores, Inc., cheerfully had the wheel fixed without charge to the customer because every sale they make carries an "UNRESTRICTED GUARANTEE."

The points are that the Bowers Stores do not handle lawn mowers, but made good on an embarrassment caused by a clerk. They pleased the customer better than he expected.

Number Four of a Series.

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